

The Washburn County Journal

Emergency response gets big shot in arm

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - A nearly \$1 million bill has passed that will help establish an aerial photo system that will help in emergency response planning.

Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (Dem.-Wis.) has explained that the FY08 Omnibus Appropriations Bill includes \$940,000 that he requested to help Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas and Washburn Counties establish a pictometry system - a database of high-resolution, full-color, digital aerial photos of the region to aid in emergency response and county planning.

"Speed is of the essence for emergency responders and the more information they have about where they're going and what they're going to encounter the better they can do their jobs," said Obey, the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. "That's why I requested these funds to help set up this system. I hope it will really help emergency responders and county planners in Northwest Wisconsin."

With its digital database of high-resolution photographs of a region, the Pictometry system is intended to enable fast and easy reference for both emergency response and county planning.

For emergency responders, the system is intended to provide enough information to quickly and more effectively react to any given situation - for law enforcement that may mean knowing what a building's measurements are during a hostage situation; for fire officials, the images can be used to measure the height of an elevator shaft for placement of ladders and hoses; for search and rescue or medical response units, the images may help locate and measure a ravine where an accident has taken place.

For county and local planners, the system provides easy access to accurate geographic information that can save time and resources as decisions are being made.